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China and India: Postcolonial Informal Empires in the Emerging Global Order

Dibyesh Anand

The recent debates within and beyond Marxism around empire and imperialism focus on deterritorialization, but fail to see non-Western states as anything other than collaborators or victims. Highlighting the importance of center-periphery relations within the territorially bounded political space of the nation-state, this paper puts forward a new concept of the Postcolonial Informal Empire (PIE) to characterize the emerging powers of China and India. The greatest paradox of PIEs is that a postcolonial impulse—to critically appropriate Western ideas and technologies such as sovereignty, nationalism, and the free market to build the multinational state and combine it with an affirmation of stories of historical greatness and long existing, pre-Westernized, civilizational-national cultures—enables the political entities to consolidate and discipline their borderlands and reduce diverse inhabiting peoples to culturally different but politically subservient subjects. It is predominantly a nationalist politics, and not economic calculability or financial interests, that shapes PIEs' center-borderlands relations.

Key Words: Imperialism, China, Tibet, India, Kashmir, Nationalism, Postcolonial

The stock of empire rose briefly during the early years of the so-called war on terror and crashed even more rapidly with the quagmires in Iraq and Afghanistan. As the American neocons started gloating about the renaissance of American imperial power and their critics warned against it (Tabachnick and Koivukosi 2009), America's prestige took a severe battering and its capacity to achieve decisive victory was exposed as hollow. With the Obama administration's foreign policy failures in 'AfPak', Iran, North Korea, the revolutions in the Arab world that exposed Western hypocrisy, and the everyday talk of the unprecedented crisis of Western capitalism, American power is very much on the back foot. In this context, the 'rise of the rest', especially China and India, is seen as a defining trend in global politics. The primary focus here is on the rise of China as a global economic and political power. How can one make sense of these emerging powers in order to better understand the changing global order? What do the center-periphery relations within these large, multiethnic states tell us about the nature of emerging powers? This paper emphasizes that the specific configurations of relations between postcolonial, imperial, and national impulses,

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especially as they play out in the borderlands, offer a new understanding of the Chinese and Indian states.

The similarity in Chinese and Indian political behavior in their peripheries during the 1950s and also the 2000s, despite the very different relations between the economic and political systems in each country, reminds us of the structuring role played by the idea of nationalism—nationalism not reducible, nor explained away as a side story, to the material conditions of the societies. India has witnessed significant changes in living conditions, the relation between the economic and political spheres, and the rhetorical and social basis of power of bourgeois nationalism between the 1950s and today. The transformation in China has been even greater. The China of the 1950s, during the emergence and consolidation of the People's Republic, was quite different from China during the upheaval of Cultural Revolution in the 1960s–1970s, and its 'opening up' under Deng Xiaoping and the 'peaceful rise' under his successors have changed the country beyond recognition. Yet what remained unchanged was the asymmetry of power between the political center and the periphery, and the deployment of a specific nationalism that allowed recognition of ethno-national minorities on the borderlands, but only on the terms set by the center. As China and India emerge as global powers largely on the basis of economic growth, it becomes important to pay closer attention to the way in which economic interests remain subservient to the nationalist political sphere in the borderlands.

Nimmi has argued that the Marxist treatment of nationalism has as its basis theories of universal evolution of the forces of production and of economic reductionism, as well as Eurocentric bias in concrete discussions of the universal process of change (1991, 185). Thankfully, much of the literature on nationalism since the 1990s has sought to move beyond all types of reductionism. In this paper, I seek to provide a specific framework for understanding China and India as emerging powers by posing questions rather than intervening in the existing debates for rethinking Marxism. A historical materialist approach may help one explain specific contours of bourgeois nationalism in India and party nationalism in China, but the similarities between Chinese and Indian behavior toward the periphery inhabited by distinct ethno-nationalist peoples can only be understood in terms of the autonomy of the political and the structuring role of the idea of national sovereignty.

The proposed concept of the Postcolonial Informal Empire (PIE) therefore performs two functions. First, it seeks to identify the key dynamics of politics in multiethnic states of China and India by problematizing simplistic understandings of imperialism and postcoloniality. Imperial ethos and actions are not exclusive privileges of the Western world. It is the nation-state that shapes the architecture of coercive control in the borderlands of India and China. The globalizing bourgeoisie of these countries remains subservient to the political power of the securitized state.

Second, it provides a framework with which to understand a non-Western polity where there is a tension between politics of ethno-nationalism of distinct peoples inhabiting territorially contiguous areas in the borderlands of the state, on the one hand, and, on the other, the efforts of the state to minoritize these people within an overarching nation-statism and discipline them through various coercive and cooptive strategies. PIE, therefore, suggests a framework that focuses on center-periphery

relations and thus offers a new and different way of mapping the nationalist politics within such states.

The Empire Talk

Scholars and commentators have sought to make sense of the rise of the non-Western powers in various ways. Some argue that the rise of the Rest poses a challenge to the West that the latter may or may not be able to cope with (Ferguson 2011; Khanna 2008; Moisi 2010; Zakaria 2008). The Chinese economic 'miracle' generates a mix of admiration, envy, and anxiety in the West. China's emergence as a global power is perceived as a threat to the West-dominated international community's values of human rights, good governance, and democracy. The examples provided are often from Africa—especially Sudan, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, where Chinese influence is seen as bolstering authoritarian regimes while the West is left helpless. This alarmist rhetoric is quite common in the corporate Western media. We also have celebratory writings from business pundits and management gurus selling 'Chindia' as a market opportunity (Engardio 2006; Sheth 2007). Giovanni Arrighi (2007) argues, though from a very different perspective, that there is an undeniable decline of the American imperial hegemony and the rise of China/East Asia. He sees this as a positive shift away from the 'destructive capitalism' of the West to the industrious capitalism of China that is based on Confucian principles of social harmony and balance.

Second, we may accept the change and look at how the emerging powers can be accommodated within the existing infrastructure of global governance. Examples of this include shifting from G8 to G20 as the key gathering for major economies and the debates over more say for emerging countries in the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the United Nations Security Council. It is clear from the World Trade Organization impasse during the ongoing Doha Development Round, where the major developing countries economies led by Brazil, China, India, and South Korea have refused to go with the U.S.-EU-Japan initiatives, that the Western states can no longer push ahead their agenda unilaterally. However, one can see that this cooption is a disciplinary move and see the rise of the non-Western powers as a victory of the West (Mishra 2006). It is by working within the existing system, by focusing on the market economy, by adopting vehemently Western political ideas of state and sovereignty though not necessarily democracy, that the non-Western powers have become resurgent. As Harvey (2007) argues, the economic resurgence of China results from a clever use of neoliberal ideas.

Third, and this is most pervasive within academia, we ignore, underplay, or deny the change. If one looks at the debate over Empire spurred by Hardt and Negri's work (2001), one wonders if there are indeed different planets on our earth. Without going into the arguments and counterarguments around Empire (see Dossier on Empire 2001), let me suggest that we have been here before, with parochialism and specificity perceiving and representing themselves as universalistic (Chakrabarty 2000). The postimperialist universal Empire of the deterritorialized rule of capital is not the primary factor in the precarious lives led by many. It is territorial and political control, often, though not necessarily, backed by transnational capital, that they

experience everyday. Imagine the confusion in Chinese-controlled Tibet or Indian-held Kashmir when you utter the word empire and do not talk of territorial occupation, brutalization of people based on their collective identity (not one related to their position within the (inter)national circuits of capital but to ethno-nationalism), militarized borders, and neglect (not appropriation) by the West. Even as the nature of capital-state relations has evolved, what has changed for Tibetans or Kashmiris over the past few decades except newer forms of control and cooption without any fundamental alteration in the brute fact of political occupation? Yes, new means of communication and technology and innovative modes of mobilization have enabled different kinds of resistance, but the target of various technologies of control deployed by the two ideologically distinct states, China and India, at different stages of development since the 1950s has remained the same: assertion of absolute political sovereignty over ethno-nationalist collectives who have, to put it mildly, a problematic relation with the majoritarian nationalism. Yet, most of the discussions in academia on Empire and imperialism ignore the non-Western states except as collaborators/victims.

The intellectuals and leftist activists who ascribe most of the ills in the world to American hyperpower and the global economic infrastructure led by the United States tend to highlight, often rightly so, the continuing dominance of the Americans (along with the Europeans). If one scans through the Marxist as well as non-Marxist writings on imperialism in recent times, most of them are about American hegemony (see Gregory 2004; Heller 2006; Kiely 2010; Panitch and Leys 2004; Shohat and Stam 2007; for exceptions, see Arrighi 2007; Bush 2006). This includes those who adopt, in the line of classical Marxism, a narrower notion of imperialism that sees it as inextricably linked to modern Western capitalist dominance (Magdoff 2003) as well as those who go beyond economic determinism and recognize imperialism as a multifaceted mode of politico-economic-cultural dominance (Harvey 2003) or those who see imperialism as simply dominance (for instance, Wolfe uses imperialism ''heuristically to group together a somewhat disparate set of theories of Western hegemony'' [2001, 352]). The collection of writings by prominent thinkers on the Left in *The New Imperial Challenge* (Panitch and Leys 2003) has nothing to offer on imperial/colonial practices of major non-Western powers. This collection and the one that came out a year later (Panitch and Leys 2004) remain focused solely on understanding American imperialism and U.S.-dominated global capitalism even while acknowledging the decline of the American power. Since the decline of American power is not happening in a vacuum but in the context of the rise of non-Western powers such as China and India, it is rather surprising that Marxist and Left writings have mostly avoided engaging with the latter. For example, Heller's (2006) global history of the cold war and the New Imperialism does talk of national liberation movements, but does not offer insight into the 'new imperialism' practiced by the newly liberated nation-states against ethno-nationalist peoples subsumed within their boundaries.

Marxian writers remind us of the increasing economic inequality engendered by globalizing capital and point toward American-led military interventions in countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq, and nonmilitary interventions in most parts of the world. But they underemphasize the role of ideas irreducible to a specific social and material condition—in this case, nationalism. Even when modern scholars have

sought to reread Marx to highlight his continuing relevance to understand non-Western societies (K. Anderson 2010), they do not engage with the architecture of power and control within them. Over the last half-century, communism as an organizing principle of economy has disappeared everywhere except in North Korea and as an ideology of the state is in decline; capitalism has undergone various transformations, and the meaning and nature of democracy have been contested and appropriated by an increasing number of people. However, nation-statism, which sees the nation and the state as overlapping and the state as the main voice of the nation, remains potent and the primary ideology around which human collectivities are organized. Contemporary Marxist writers on new imperialism and empire, mentioned above, usually avoid engaging with nationalism as a continuing phenomenon even as much of the Left scholarship on nationalism remains focused on its history, rather than the present, in different parts of the world (Anderson 2006; Chatterjee 1986, 1993; Hobsbawm 1990). The identity politics around nationalism has proved to be more durable, pervasive, and flexible than many Marxists would credit it for (for a discussion of identity politics and the Left, see Bramen 2002). Callinicos is right in arguing that capitalist imperialism is constituted by the intersection of two forms of competition, namely economic and geopolitical (2009, 15). While he alludes to 'Chinese expansion' in the context of American decline today, by neglecting the continuities in political (domestic as well as geopolitical) behavior of China at least since the early twentieth century, he does not explain why one should see China as part of 'capitalist imperialism' and not 'imperialism'. Callari argues that there is a rise of new U.S. imperialism with a new arrangement for the global slurping of surplus value, a project connected to a 'novel global crusade for bourgeois democracy' (Callari 2008, 700), but ignores how different ethno-nationalist groups in the non-West may appropriate democracy, even its bourgeois form, as resistance to the everyday terror they face from their states.

Postcolonial writers on the other hand, focus more on noneconomic forms of control. Postcolonial theorists have rightly highlighted the protean and diverse ways in which Western dominance of the non-West was established, asserted, contested, reasserted, and continued, and the role of ideas and representations in this (Bhabha 1994; McClintock 1995; Prakash 1995; Said 1978, 1993; Sharpe 1993; Spurr 1993; Suleri 1992). However, the focus on racialized and gendered representations that constitute as well as legitimize asymmetry of power often avoids macropolitical questions (Ahmad 1994; Anand 2007; Scott 1999) and mostly remains confined to the imperial relations between the West and the non-West.

A critique of India or China and their possible expansionism is not a favorite topic within the Left. Marxist engagement with bourgeois democracy in India and with the party state in China (or shall we say 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'?) is usually confined to identifying and resisting inequities resulting from the marketized state (see, for instance, Harvey 2007). The preoccupation is with economic oppressions within the core of the state. There is insufficient engagement with the nation-state as an autonomous actor and only limited understanding of ethno-nationalist movements that claim a separate identity for themselves.

My proposed concept of PIE therefore seeks to push the boundaries of postcolonial, Marxist, and Left scholarships by highlighting the specificities of China and India,

where the center-periphery relations within the bounded community tell a crucial story about the politics of nation-statism in generating a postcolonial, informal imperialism. I use the term postcolonial loosely to imply a self-understanding on the part of China and India that they have been victims of (foreign) imperialism in the past and, even as they are rising as economic and geopolitical players now, they have limited power of agenda-setting in the West-dominated international system. Formal empires are marked by a distinction between the metropolis and colonies within the polity. Since in China and India all citizens are equal and officially no one group has primacy over others, they are not formal but informal empires. However, I am not using the term informal empire as it has been understood usually, as visible political and economic control beyond one's territory without an architecture of direct administration. The term is often deployed to describe British influence and hegemony beyond its formal empire, often in the context of the doctrine of free trade (Robinson and Gallagher 1953; see also Aguirre 2005; McLean 1976). The emphasis for me is on the internal and not external relations of China and India. How do the territories and people in the periphery, often with a distinct sense of ethno-nationalism defined in opposition to the majoritarian nationalism, relate to the center/core? This relation is imperial. It is based on territorial conquest/liberation in the recent past; on subjugation of the distinct groups of people and appropriation of their history, identity, life, and death as part of the grand story of one unified polity; on an asymmetry of power maintained through coercion and consent. I prefer to call it Informal Empire because formally the structures of authority allow for equality between all the citizens.

Center-Periphery Relations in the PIEs

Let me expand the concept of postcolonial informal empires. They have, at the core of their polity, center-periphery relations of power that minoritize borderland ethno-nationalist communities within the large nationalist project, that reluctantly accept cultural difference and autonomy but reject any compromise on military and political control and deny political agency to the borderlands minorities. They see themselves as continuations of historical, great civilizational empires, which sets them apart from some Western hegemonic powers, such as the United States. The United States does not have a memory of a great historical empire that it can draw upon. And this proposed concept will not be very useful unless we show how it is not just another word for multiethnic state. PIE as a concept is different from multiethnic state because the relationship between the center and the periphery in the PIE is asymmetrical, one that has strong imperial impulses. A multiethnic state may have ethnicity-based inequalities, but this is a problem for the entire society and not peripheral regions primarily. The minorities in a multiethnic state may or may not have a strong sense of ethno-nationalism, but the PIEs have ethno-nationalist communities of people who continue to resist minoritization within the large nation-state and retain a conception of a distinct territorial homeland. PIEs have a number of related characteristic features.

Self-Denial

PIE is a political entity based on a defensive denial of the charge of imperialism. Its identity is formed around a sense of being a victim of Western imperialism. The emerging powers understand and represent their own rise as shedding off of colonial legacy—hence an avowed identity as a postcolonial state—while at the same time rejecting the label of imperialism/colonization for any of their actions. A PIE refuses to see its activities in its periphery or in other parts of the world as imperialist or neocolonialist. China vehemently rejects the accusation of colonizing Tibetan or Uighur areas, and in fact continues to deploy the term 'peaceful liberation' and 'democratic reforms' for its assertion and consolidation of control over these territories.

Since the formation of the People's Republic of China and the incorporation of Xinjiang, this region has witnessed a manifold rise of Han Chinese population, mostly through induced migration from the hinterlands even as the Uighur Muslims' share of the population came down consistently (Toops 2004). A prominent role in this has been played by the quasi-militarized Bingtuan—that is, the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (Bhattacharji 2009) that since 1954 has assumed the ''duties of cultivating and guarding the frontier areas entrusted to it by the state'' (Information Office 2003). The Western Development Project of China, which will affect Xinjiang, Tibet, and other provinces and autonomous regions, is more than a program for rapid economic development; it is meant to bring 'stability' to the periphery (Goodman 2004; Lai 2002). It is interesting to note that most of the targets of this Go West project are ethnic minority areas, and the migration of better-skilled Han is seen as an inevitable and even an essential component of the project.

Not only does China deny practicing colonial occupation in Tibet or swamping it with Han Chinese migration (Jing Wei 1989), but it has recently created a new annual holiday on 28 March in Tibet called Serfs Emancipation Day to remind the younger generation of how the 'old Tibet' under the Dalai Lama was feudal and oppressive. Chinese propaganda and diplomacy spend millions of yuans making a case that control over Tibet is in the best interests of Tibetans. Significant emphasis is put on blaming foreign imperialists (especially British) and hostile foreign powers (led by the United States) for creating most of the troubles in Tibet through their backing of the archseparatist, the Dalai Lama. The Tibetans wanting a different fate for themselves are seen as stooges of imperialists, while those working for the status quo inside China are celebrated as patriotic anti-imperialists. Because Tibet and Xinjiang have the status of 'autonomous regions', which is supposed to protect certain privileges for the local Tibetans and Uighurs (for instance, only they can be the nominal head of the local government in their respective regions or the one-child policy is relaxed for them), China represents itself as nonimperial.

In the case of India, the emphasis is on self-representation as a responsible democracy. While Indian foreign policy in recent years has shifted to work closely with Western countries as strategic partners, there is a strong sense of being unique when it comes to combining plurality, traditional civilization, and modern democracy. In India, the self-serving notion of being a moral postimperial country with values of Gandhian nonviolence and Nehruvian nonalignment, and therefore avoiding crude

power politics, remains entrenched. Even as the Indian state brutalizes populations in its peripheries and subverts democracy by allowing the military and paramilitary a free hand, it peddles the myth of a postcolonial democratic nation. Thus, these PIEs are consciously postcolonial.

Historical Memory

PIEs nurture discourses of past and future glory. They seek to give a solid base to the core nation-states by marshaling a strong historical memory of being great empires in the not-too-distant past and striving to regain their rightful place soon. The future is seen in terms of a historical continuity ruptured temporarily by a couple of hundred years of decline. Civilizational identity becomes salient here, for the reference point of continuity is not a preexisting nation-state but a civilizational polity. Anderson is right in his comments: "Talk of 'civilizations' is notoriously self-serving, and delimitations of them arbitrary ... Like France in the 1930s or 1950s, contemporary China is an integrist nation-state, cast in an *imperial mould*, if with a much longer past and on a much larger scale" (P. Anderson 2010; emphasis added). However, the official narratives in China and India focus increasingly on civilizational continuity.

Third world nationalisms have had a tension between being a mobilizing force for resistance and change and an organizing principle to bring a new order. This new nation-statist order's record in being inclusive and representative of all the people living within the bounded community has been poor. Dominant nationalisms in India and China have lost their anticolonial/revolutionary ethos and are becoming mere affirmations of civilizational identity. Celebration of thousand of years of historical glory, punctured only by attacks by hostile forces from without and disunity within, takes the place of the emancipatory, progressive liberatory impulse of anticolonial or revolutionary nationalisms. The source of pride is the emergent nation, but one which is merely a modern expression of an ancient civilizational entity. There is limited tolerance of dissent from this picture of centuries of glory upset by decades of humiliation that are over now and will soon be followed by a regaining of rightful place as a great power in the scheme of things.

Distant history and the impending future are sources of affirmation while recent history is a source of shame and reminder of dangers. China fits in well in this. While celebrating five thousand years of continuous history, through various techniques and ideas, Tibet is made part of the motherland and declared always part of China (Informational Office 1992). Tibetan history is made a local chapter of the bigger history of China. The treaty between the Tang and Tubo dynasties of China and Tibet, a treaty of the eighth century that was clearly between equals, is now interpreted as between those who were unequal. Tibetan King Songsten Gampo's marriage with Nepali Princess Bhrikuti and with Chinese Princess Wencheng was important in introducing Buddhism to Tibet in the eighth century; however, in the modern Chinese nationalist narrative, there is an obsessive emphasis on Wencheng bringing Buddhism and civilization to Tibet, ignoring the role of the Nepali princess and, more important, of great Buddhist masters, most of whom were Indians. While the Indian influence on

Tibet is grudgingly acknowledged when it becomes unavoidable, the emphasis is on narrating a story of a glorious Chinese civilizational history of which Tibet was always a part.

Dissident narratives of history are papered over as the only valid narrative is one that confirms Tibet to have always been an 'inalienable' part of the great motherland of China. The facts that question the dominant story are ignored. For example, during Tang-Tubo times, the treaty clearly demarcated boundaries between China and Tibet, hence saw them as separate entities (Norbu 2001). Tibetan lamas had politico-religious relations only with the Mongol and Manchu empires (Sperling 2008). While modern Chinese nationalism has minoritized Mongols and Manchus as part of the 'Chinese nation' since the days of Sun Yat-sen, historically the Mongol and Manchu emperors retained a distinct identity even while presiding over an empire in China. Finally, it is not helpful to use contemporary concepts such as sovereignty or independence to reinterpret Chinese-Tibetan relations (Anand 2009). These examples point to the selectiveness of memory in the dominant historical discourse of the civilizational nation-state.

In a similar manner, the mainstream Indian historical narratives are celebratory of thousands of years of continuity, plurality resulting from a mix of different empires and communities, while they emphasize some type of organic link between Gautama Buddha, ancient emperor Ashoka, Mughal emperor Akbar, and Mahatama Gandhi. The Hindu nationalists offer an alternative vision of historical memory in India; they focus more on the greatness of ancient Hindu civilization while presenting the Muslim rulers, including the Mughals, as foreign along with the British. While the mainstream secularist and the rising Hindu nationalist visions differ on what parts of history to use, both draw sustenance from the supposed uniqueness of Indian civilizational history.

Schizophrenia

In the emerging PIEs, the modern nationalist elites have a split attitude toward the last premodern empires. The imperial dynasties are blamed for the decay of the nationalist and civilizational spirit, for failing to unify the country against the European colonialists, for corruption of society. We see this especially in China, with early nationalists blaming the 'foreign' Manchus—the rulers during the Qing dynasty which lasted until 1911—for weakening the country and failing to ward off the evil Europeans. At the same time, the nationalists have fewer problems making claims over the far-flung territories that had been ruled by the last premodern empires. The religious and symbolic content of *mchod-yon* (patron-priest relations) between the Qing emperors, who followed Tibetan Buddhism and were often seen in terms of Buddhist iconography, and the Tibetan lamas who were respected as priests for the rulers, is completely transformed into relations of power and political control. China ignores the fact that the representatives of the 'central government' to Lhasa before 1908 were always Manchus or Mongols, who were always Buddhists and never Han. While these religious connections between Beijing and Lhasa, part of the 'feudal' old

system, are rejected or ignored, the modern Chinese state is only too happy to make territorial claims based on those relations.

Indian nationalists faced a challenge different from China. India was British India, unlike China which retained its formal independence and a government recognized as legitimate by foreign imperial powers. In India, the crucial question concerned relations between the two religious groups, Hindus and Muslims (roughly one-third of the population). Mainstream Indian nationalism, under the Indian National Congress, was a civic and a territorial one that included celebration of Mughal history, especially the figure of Akbar, as contributing to 'unity in diversity'. However, there was a conspicuous, Hinduized nationalist strand, too, which saw the periods of Muslim rule as periods of decline of the otherwise great Indian/Hindu nation. After 1947, the Indian state had no qualms in exercising control over territories and peoples, especially in the North East, even though the nationalist movement had left those parts largely untouched. Postcolonial India became a successor state to British India in all kinds of different ways.

In our efforts to make sense of the reemergence of large civilizational political entities and to see how they move beyond a normal sense of statehood and thus necessitate a conception of IE, we should not forget crucial differences from their historical antecedents. Historical empires did not have an absolutist conception of state; boundaries were blurred, and various forms of political control (including overlordship, suzerainty, partial sovereignty, and paramountcy) coexisted. The sense of belonging to the empire was multilayered, ever shifting, and fuzzy.

The PIEs, on the other hand, are quite different. There is no emperor and sovereignty resides in people. Be it democratic India or communist China, the source of legitimacy for political rule is the people. The state does not presume loyalty through the very fact of its existence. Rather, it seeks to cultivate loyalty among its citizens by representing itself as the embodiment of popular sovereignty. Popular sovereignty implies that PIE will remain wedded to the modern sense of statehood for the near future. PIEs remain bounded communities in principle and practice. They seek to firm up their control in the frontier zones and to assert influence beyond their borders tentatively. Territorial expansion, a feature of historical empires, is conspicuous by its absence in the case of PIEs. Thus, the PIEs push their political influence beyond their boundaries not for territorial expansion, but to ensure stability and resources for continuing growth inside the borders.

Majoritarian Center and the Minoritized Periphery

Beyond the rhetoric of unity in diversity lies the reality of the dominance of a majoritarian identity. While it is the multiethnic history and present that make a country a possible PIE, if one scratches beneath the veneer of the rhetoric of unity, one can see the dominance of a majoritarian streak. Of course, nationalisms are contested and complicated and there are always different strains of it. Some are inclusionary and some are exclusionary to the point of being racist toward minorities. But even inclusionary nationalism tends to have a majoritarian identity as the core. For example, Sun Yat-sen's idea of five nationalities as five fingers of the Chinese

nation, the Han, Hui, Mongol, Manchu and Tibetan, or Communist China's recognition and acceptance of the autonomy of minority nationalities, or the Indian National Congress's secular nationalism, all emanate from a central majoritarian identity (Blum 2002; Bulag 2002; Dikotter 1992; Dreyer 1976; Gladney 1994; Friedman 1995; Herberer 1989; Mackerras 2003; Gould 2004; Jaffrelot 1999; Pannikar 2010; Van Der Veer 1994). The progressive nationalist Han or the Hindu figure is the norm while all other religious and ethnic groups are marked by their difference. They may be equal, but never the norm. The ethno-nationalist groups inhabiting the territorial peripheries of the modern polities of China and India are even more distanced from the norm. An Indian Muslim or a Hui Muslim sharing everything but religion is closer to the majoritarian norm of Hindu or Han than a Kashmiri Muslim, Naga Christian, Uighur Muslim, or Tibetan Buddhist. Thus, it is the formally equal but, in practice, unequal and patronizing relation of power between the majoritarian civilizational-national core and the peripheral identities that renders PIEs imperial.

PIEs are multicultural and multiethnic with a territorial aspect. It is not so much about the diversity of population, but also the existence of distinct and discrete ethnic communities living in geographically specific areas. The PIE sees a balance between unity and multiplicity. The discourse of PIE makes use of its multiethnic character to assert influence beyond the core within the state. PIE often uses its own complicit minorities to exercise its influence over ethno-nationally distinct regions in the periphery. Much effort and many ideas go into ensuring visible cooption of representatives of minority regions. If we take the example of China, while Han Chinese party workers, government officials, soldiers, and businesspeople form the ultimate backbone of political control over minority regions of Tibet and Xinjiang, the state always strives to give publicity to loyalist ethnic Uighurs and Tibetans.

Since the March 2008 protests in Tibet, China has been marshaling speaker after speaker, delegate after delegate, former serf after former serf, and lama after lama, to praise the 'motherland' for liberating them from the old theocracy under the Dalai Lama before 1959. The brutal reality of political and military control and conspicuous omnipresence of military and paramilitary forces are papered over through the figures of loyal ethnic minorities thanking the central government and denouncing the exiled critics; the spectacles of ceremonies affirming unity with the motherland; and happy, singing, dancing 'natives' leading their lives without any notion of oppression or discrimination. In this, PIE seeks to rule through a mix of coercion and consent, with emphasis on the former.

Indian political culture is different from that of China, but the combination of repression and cooption when it comes to the periphery is equally conspicuous (Anand 2010). Unlike the leftist movements in the heartland of India—the Maoists—which demand a transformation of India, the political movements in the periphery are not concerned about politico-economic changes in India; their demands have an ethno-nationalist ethos. As the 2010 protests in Indian-controlled Kashmir show (Kaul 2010), the struggle is more than about development and livelihood. It is about *azaadi*: 'freedom', and it is about protection of a particular people, the Kashmiris. The Indian state responds by buying out, suppressing, or ignoring dissenters in the periphery. Democracy for Kashmiris and many in the North East has meant a corrupt and compliant local elite propped up by the center through fraudulent elections; everyday

humiliation and reminders that mainstream India does not trust them; the overwhelming presence of the security forces, protected by special laws; and the onslaught of Indian propaganda, often with the active complicity of broadcast media to misrepresent all demands made by the ethno-nationalist activists as illegitimate and as stemming from extremism. The level of violence deployed by the Indian state in its periphery, and the mundane and quotidian nature of that state violence, are reminders of the asymmetry of power between the center and the periphery.

Despite the acceptance of cultural difference, the terms of the consent of the peripheral subjects are set by the center. The minority ethnics are citizens and notionally equal, but their visibility in the national platform is only when they represent their cultural difference. Any expression of political difference of course has no room. In China, the minority nationalities already have been given autonomy and hence no further demands are possible. The only 'good' minorities are those who are forever grateful for whatever policy the central government comes up with. Tibetan officials' main role is to thank the central government and the party's leadership for everything good in Tibet. In India, different people from the North Eastern regions and Kashmir are presented as an integral part of unity in diversity. Their agency is recognized only when they are culturally different, as ingredients adding color. Thus, conscious use of the rhetoric of multiethnic nationalism and cultural difference to extend influence in the minority-inhabited peripheral regions, together with a willful ignorance and/or suppression of political aspirations, characterize China and India as PIEs.

Mechanisms of Control: Representations and Development

A part of this paranoid empire is the state's indulgence in a particular politics of cultural representation. Cultural representations are central to understanding PIEs and the relations of the center with the periphery. Here, the postcolonial scholarship focused on teasing out the role of images and representations in making possible certain policies is most useful. In PIEs, the minorities, especially those on the periphery and those with distinct identities, are represented in a manner similar to the Orientalist depiction of the non-Western world. The images range from that of a grateful, colorful minority to an ungrateful one out to split the polity.

The state consciously focuses on the role of the media in presenting views of the state correctly, and hence publicizing them, but never to present the views of the people. In India, otherwise known for its argumentative public culture, the corporatized media act as the agent of the securitized state when it comes to voices from the periphery. Dissenting voices on Kashmir or the North Eastern regions are either ignored or misrepresented as extremist or separatist. In times of 'calm', or rather, when the people in the periphery have been pacified through the use of force and propaganda, the cultures of these places are celebrated as colorful additions to the primary story of mainstream nationalism. A recent White Paper on Ethnic Minorities in China makes clear the role it sees for media representations: "The state also pays great attention to relevant training for those working in press and publishing, gives guidance and encouragement to them to correctly comprehend

and actively publicize ethnic policies, laws and regulations and basic knowledge in this regard'' (People's Republic of China 2009).

Representations also function to give a sense of coherence to the identity of the polity by mixing the politics of hope and fear. Citizens and subjects of PIEs hope for a better future where they will regain their past glory. At the same time they are mobilized around a fear of possible enemies within the society: dissidents, critics, fifth column minorities, separatist ethno-nationalist groups in the periphery, and, in the international arena, the old, arrogant West, or a jealous neighbor.

A primary political mechanism through which PIEs assert their influence outside the core is through militarized and/or tightly controlled development. The center-periphery relations in PIEs regarding underdevelopment are similar to as well as different from the core-periphery international relations articulated by dependency theory. Underdevelopment is not a state of original backwardness or isolation, but neither is it necessarily a product of 'a particular pattern of specialization and exploitation in the periphery' (Brewer 1990, 18). While the patterns of specialization and exploitation in the colonial and neocolonial are a product of policy choices, it is the economic imperative that is the primary driver of collective behavior according to dependency theory. In PIEs, nationalist and strategic narratives dictate whether a geographically peripheral region will be kept economically underdeveloped or not. Economic backwardness in the periphery in China and India results from official neglect, such as in Kashmir in India, and for many decades, and in Tibet in China, and/or conscious policy such as in the North Eastern regions in India, for it is easier to politically control, in collaboration with the local elite, an economically backward place. When the state adopts the policy of rapid modern transformation, as China and India have done in recent decades, the economic well-being of the ethno-nationalist communities in the periphery is perceived mostly through the lens of political, military, and strategic priorities. Again, to use the Chinese example, the Western Development Programme aimed to rectify the huge imbalance between the well-developed and rich coastal east and the sparsely populated, backward west, large parts of which happen to be inhabited by the two most 'restless' minorities—Uighurs and Tibetans. Road building by the Indian government in its periphery is dictated by military and strategic needs, and any benefit to the local population is incidental. Thus, 'development' serves to keep the border people domesticated and, at the same time, acts as a symbol of strength for those living across the borders in neighboring countries. Development is subservient to the strategic needs of the state.

Domestic Legitimacy and the Paranoia of Power

Using the example of the Russian and Soviet empires, Lieven (2002) has argued that it is the international context that has had a primary defining impact on how the empire expands, consolidates, or collapses. For instance, foreign ideological and military competition made the economic system in the Soviet Union incompatible with new needs and led to a crisis and its subsequent collapse. In a similar way, Manchu and Mughal decline and collapse were products of pressures from outside forces. Internal weakness became crucial only because of competition from the technologically

modern European forces. In contrast, the PIEs' major internal policies are not driven primarily by external pressure. Domestic legitimacy is an equally important aspect. Foreign policy is, to a significant extent, a response to the domestic needs of the political regimes in PIEs. Foreign capital has no desire to upset the political systems in place for they need the stability provided by them. In China, the shift of governing principles, in practice, from communism to a market economy without any letup in the authoritarian control of the Communist party, has meant that sustained (and rapid) economic growth and nationalism are the main mechanisms through which political legitimacy is maintained. An unimpeded economic development requires a stable international environment and an open access to resources abroad. The foreign policy of China thus is fueled by this specific need for an international environment which allows for uninterrupted economic growth to keep the domestic situation stable.

In India, imperial actions in the border regions are directed at persuading the public in the core that the nationalist security state can act effectively. Indian expansionism in the postindependence era, realizing control over areas not administered directly by British India, was not dictated by the needs of the market. There is no evidence of the nationalist bourgeoisie pressuring the state to bring the territories, especially those in the Himalayan periphery, under control, claims over which it inherited, rather problematically and in quite ambiguous terms, from British India. Indian control over Jammu and Kashmir in 1948, over Tawang (which China claims is illegally occupied by India) in 1951, and in general over the North Eastern regions beyond the plains of Assam, a region that was important for tea and oil, cannot be explained predominantly in terms of economic imperatives or interests. The Indian nationalist bourgeoisie did not see these regions as economically indispensable whether as a source for resources or labor or as a market. Still, the Indian state chose to act upon the territorial claims it inherited from the British and convince the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir to accede to India. The history of postcolonial India has been one of suppression of narratives and narrators who dissent from the dominant idea of India. This can only be explained in terms of the power of nationalism. Jammu and Kashmir become integral to India as a validation of Indian secularism (Kashmir is the only Muslim-majority province); any compromise with the aspirations of the people in the North East is seen as a slide down the slippery slope of balkanization. The nationalist instinct of the central governments toward international calls for human rights in the peripheral regions is to always pose this issue as a 'national security' problem and continue the policies with often added rigor, under a false 'anti-imperialist' or 'anti–big power' rhetoric.

PIEs are powerful entities. A discourse of empire is a discourse of strength. Empires by their very nature exude power and prestige. And yet the PIEs have a touchy attitude toward prestige. PIEs have a certain paranoia at the heart of their being. The fear is that a compromise over political control in the periphery is a slippery slope that ends with a breakup of the empire/state. Hence, compromises and protests that are tolerable in the core of the political entities are branded as dangers to national unity and stability in the periphery. The elite and the rest in the center will accept as normal the state's use of overwhelming coercion and undemocratic shenanigans. Exceptions in the core are normal in the periphery as PIEs remain neurotic about their

vulnerability. If one looks at Indian state actions in Kashmir, we see the public acceptance of draconian laws (such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act that allows the security forces to act with impunity) and of the free media's complicity with state propaganda. The imperial Indian state manages to legitimize its suppression of a specific people in the name of fighting terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. Any reminder of the special status of Kashmir, which had acceded to India with the assurance of autonomy and under specific treaty conditions most of which have been eroded, generates paranoia in Delhi regarding antinationalist separatism. Women in Manipur in North East India, protesting against brutalization and sexualization by the army, are branded as security threats. The case of Tibet also demonstrates the neurotic state characteristic of the relationshop of PIEs to borderlands. There is absolutely no avenue for Tibetans to express their dissatisfaction with any policy without being accused of separatism and working for the 'Dalai clique'. The Chinese government has not only prohibited the possession of the Dalai Lama's picture, but accelerated the 'patriotic education campaign' that requires Tibetan monks and nuns to denounce the figure they venerate as sacred (Hilsum 2008). There is a primacy of unity and territorial integrity over everything else. Stability is privileged over humanity, a stability very narrowly defined.

Conclusion

I have argued that India and China, though two very different political systems—one a bourgeois multiparty democracy and other a Communist party state, display similar political behavior toward their periphery (see also Anand 2007, 2009, 2010). While one may seek to explain this similarity today in postreform years through the role of capital and markets, how about the earlier 1950s through the 1970s period when third worldism/revolutionary ideology was at its peak? The commonality in their political behavior stems from the role played by the ideas of sovereign nationalism. As postcolonial nationalism in India and revolutionary nationalism in China metamorphosed into ruling ideologies in 1950s, the attitude toward different ethno-nationalist groups, now minoritized within the larger multiethnic state, rapidly shifted away from uneasy accommodation to absolute control in the name of national unity. Political choices made by political leaders like Mao Zedong and Jawaharlal Nehru were crucial, but these choices need to be understood within their context. That context is less about social relations of production and more about the idea of political nationalism. Following Althusser, relations are before the subject, but the foundation of these relations is less economic than posited by Marxian thinking.

When it comes to what count as the core issues for the state, and this includes the identity of multiethnic states itself, identities which get tested most acutely in the borderlands, the economic remain subservient to the political. For instance, in the border regions economic principles well accepted in the core remain firmly constrained by political considerations.

In order to better understand global change today and in the near future, we need to shift from focusing exclusively on the West/non-West dynamic to talking about large, multiethnic, postcolonial states in Asia where historical memories of great imperial

pasts are retained in different forms. What we see with the resurgence of China and India is a conscious affirmation of their multiethnic statehood that nevertheless disciplines multiplicity and difference—a desire to minoritize distinct ethno-nationalist communities inhabiting the borderlands through the use of an overarching nationalism, militarized development, and securitized state. This continuing process of acknowledging cultural difference but erasing political identities makes the multiethnic states postcolonial informal empires while instilling a constant anxiety about the precariousness of the imperial/state project.

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